



FREQUENT QUESTIONS ABOUT STAGE TWO WATERING RESTRICTIONS

What is the Water Use Management Ordinance?

To help conserve our treated drinking water, the City of Austin has adopted a water use management ordinance (Chapter 6-4 of City Code). The ordinance outlines restrictions that may be placed on water use in response to supply and demand triggers or emergency conditions. Every act prohibited by this ordinance is considered a separate offense. Each offense is a Class C misdemeanor and is punishable by fines starting at \$475.

How are Stage Two water restrictions different from Stage One restrictions?

In response to the ongoing drought, the City Manager has ordered the implementation of Stage Two Restrictions based on triggers under the water use management ordinance. The following additional restrictions are effective as of September 6, 2011 and until further notice (water waste is prohibited year-round):

- Outdoor watering is restricted to once a week on the designated watering day unless using a handheld hose or bucket
- Use of automatic irrigation systems is limited to between 12 a.m. and 10 a.m. on the designated watering day
- Use of outdoor fountains is prohibited except when necessary to provide aeration for aquatic life
- Indoor fountains cannot be filled, refilled or have water added
- Automatic fill valves cannot be used to add water to outdoor swimming pools, wading pools or ponds
- Restaurants may not serve water unless requested by the customer
- The washing of sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, or other paved areas is prohibited except to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard
- Vehicle washing, except at a commercial carwash, is limited to designated watering day and times unless necessary to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard.
- Charity car washes are prohibited unless a waterless cleaning product is used instead of water

Why are we in Stage Two restrictions now?

The City's Drought Contingency Plan states that the City Manager may consider water use restrictions in response to supply or demand conditions. The supply trigger for Stage Two restrictions is a combined storage level of less than 900,000 acre-feet in Lakes Travis and Buchanan. Because the lakes were expected to reach that level and no significant rainfall was forecast, the City Manager announced on August 17, 2011, that he would implement Stage Two restrictions effective September 6, 2011. The combined storage fell below 900,000 acre-feet on August 23, 2011.

Do the Stage 2 restrictions apply to me?

All customers who use water, other than reclaimed water, supplied by Austin Water are required to follow the Stage 2 watering restrictions. If your water does not come from Austin Water, check with your water provider for the restrictions in your area. If you have a well and use groundwater you should check with the local groundwater conservation district for your area. If you take water directly from the Highland Lakes, you should contact the LCRA at (512) 473-3231.

Watering Day/Time Questions

What is my watering day?

The outdoor watering schedule is determined by street address and property type as follows:

- **Saturday**
Residential customers (4 or fewer units) with addresses ending in an odd number
- **Sunday**
Residential customers (4 or fewer units) with addresses ending in an even number
- **Tuesday**
Commercial and multifamily customers (including common areas of condominiums or homeowners' associations) with street addresses ending in an odd number
- **Friday**
Commercial and multifamily customers (including common areas of condominiums or homeowners' associations) with street addresses ending in an even number

What times can I operate my automatic irrigation system?

You may schedule your system for irrigation no earlier than 12:01 a.m. on your designated water use day. All cycles must be complete by 10:00 a.m. that same day. This also applies to the manual operation of an automatic sprinkler system.

How should I change my irrigation system's programming for once a week watering?

After reducing the programming to one day, increase the number of minutes by 20-50% to allow for a deeper watering in the landscape. Be aware that this increase could result in water runoff on many properties. If that is the case, utilize the additional starting times on the sprinkler controller and run 2 or 3 cycles with fewer minutes or until no runoff occurs.

Example:

If you were watering 10 minutes on a station twice per week during Stage 1, you would now water 12-15 minutes for that station on your Stage 2 outdoor water use day. If 12 minutes results in excess water running off the landscape, then you would need to run 2 cycles of 6 minutes each. Both cycles would run in the morning spaced about 1-2 hours apart.

When may I water with a hose-end sprinkler, a soaker hose or drip irrigation?

You may water with a hose-end sprinkler, a soaker hose, or drip irrigation only from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and/or from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. on your assigned outdoor water use day. If your drip irrigation system is part of an automatic sprinkler system you must turn off the spray head zones.

What about watering with a hand-held hose?

You may water with a hand-held hose or bucket any time of day and any day of the week (including Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays).

I live in a condo. What is my watering day under Stage 2 restrictions?

Individual owner-operated condo sprinkler systems are treated as residential properties and should follow the residential property watering schedule. Individual watering days are determined by the number of the condo. Odd-numbered condos should water on Saturday. Even-numbered condos should water Sunday.

The irrigation system in the common area of the condo association, operated by the property management, should follow the commercial property watering schedule. Odd-numbered addresses should water on Tuesday and even-numbered addresses should water on Friday. Addresses are determined by the address of the water utility service account.

I live in a mobile home park. When do I water under Stage 2 restrictions?

Individually-operated sprinklers should water by the street address or unit number of the mobile home: odd-numbers should water on Saturday, even-numbers on Sunday. Common areas maintained by the park management should water according to the address associated with the utility account.

What about carriage house or garage apartments marked with a “half” address, or duplexes?

Since these properties are typically on the same side as the “main” house, water according to that number. For example, 2025 ½ Elm Street would water with odd-numbered addresses.

When can the residents of my four-plex water?

Properties with four or fewer units should water according to the residential schedule. Each unit will have the same watering day based on the property’s street address (not unit number). Properties with five or more units should water on the commercial/multifamily schedule.

Watering Trees**How can I keep my trees alive?**

Established trees are generally well-equipped to survive the drought, though they may end their growing cycle early. Austin’s City Arborist recommends focusing watering efforts on newly planted trees (3 years or less, or a trunk diameter smaller than your wrist) and those in areas that have been disturbed by construction or other activities. There are a number of recommendations on the arborist’s website at www.ci.austin.tx.us/trees/default.htm, but generally you should water trees as follows:

- For new trees, about 5 gallons twice a week per diameter inch of tree trunk measured at about knee height. You can use a soaker hose or spray on your watering day; hand-water or use the “bucket” method mid-week. Focus watering on the tree’s drip line; avoid soaking the trunk.
- For established, stressed trees, 10 gallons per inch in trunk diameter once every two weeks. Focus on the drip line, far away from the tree trunk – this is where the newest roots will reach for water.
- A tree bladder or buckets around the drip line may be used at any time.

Enforcement of Water Use Restrictions**What are the potential consequences of a watering schedule violation?**

A violation is a class C misdemeanor, subject to a fine starting at \$475 per violation, per occurrence. Fines for specific violations are assessed by the Municipal Court, and a list of fines (inclusive of court costs) is available at http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/court/fine_sch.htm.

How do I report violations of the ordinance?

To report a violation, you may call Austin 3-1-1 or report online at www.WaterWiseAustin.org. When reporting a violation, please be prepared to provide the address, time and date of violation, and type of violation. Additional information such as a business name or specific location on the property is also helpful.

Please note that we are not typically able to respond immediately to 311 reports. However, we do use the reported information to follow up on reports at a time likely to observe the violation, and to prioritize patrols by neighborhood.

Are you really enforcing the ordinance?

Since the revised Water Use Management Ordinance took effect October 1, 2007, efforts have focused on educating customers. During Stage 2, violations witnessed by City staff will result in an official warning by mail. The violator must return proof of having corrected the problem or a citation will be issued in municipal court. Any observation of a repeat violation will result in immediate citation.

Do Travis County residents who live in the Austin ETJ and have water service from Austin Water have to follow the City of Austin’s watering restrictions?

The restrictions apply to water supplied by Austin Water. If you receive water from Austin Water, you need to comply with the restrictions. Austin City Code and Texas statute gives the City enforcement authority in the ETJ.

I've reported a violation several times – why hasn't there been a citation?

Additional enforcement personnel are being enlisted to ensure that we can investigate all reported watering violations; patrols and investigations will be scheduled around the clock. However, a staff member must witness and document the violation before a citation can be issued. We are not typically able to respond immediately to all 311 reports, but we do use the reported information to follow up on reports at a time likely to observe the violation, and to prioritize patrols by neighborhood.

Outdoor Fountain Questions

Ornamental fountains can operate if aeration is necessary to preserve aquatic life – what does that mean?

Aquatic life includes any fish or other organism that requires oxygen in the water to survive.

Can I operate a recirculating fountain?

Austin City Code does not distinguish between recirculating (recycling) fountains and other types. All fountains should be turned off unless necessary to sustain aquatic life.

Can I operate my fountain if it uses graywater/reclaimed water?

No. State law permits up to 400 gallons per day of residential graywater to be used, but is very strict about allowable applications (subsurface irrigation, foundation watering) and does not allow graywater to be sprayed in the air. Reclaimed water supplied by Austin Water is not the same as graywater. Reclaimed water is highly treated and may be used in a fountain; however, we are unaware of any current Austin Water reclaimed customers that operate fountains using reclaimed water.

Can I operate my fountain if I fill it by hand (or with bottled water)?

No. The ordinance does not make a distinction between fountains filled with a hose and those with a potable water connection. And while the ordinance technically applies only to water supplied by Austin Water, it would be difficult for citizens reporting violations or enforcement staff investigating them to identify the water source. We ask that all ornamental fountains be turned off.

I have a water feature in my garden – can I operate it?

Any water features that include falling or streaming water should be turned off to minimize water loss due to evaporation.

I have a small fountain inside my house (on my patio) – does the ordinance apply?

Stage 2 restrictions address outdoor ornamental fountains. Small tabletop fountains that could be used indoors or outdoors may continue to operate.

My fountain supplies water to area wildlife- may I continue to operate it?

If the fountain sprays water into the air, it may not be turned on. Under Stage 2 restrictions you may add water with a handheld hose or bucket to provide water to animals or to serve as a birdbath.

When may I refill my birdbath under Stage 2 water restrictions?

You may refill your birdbath with a handheld hose or bucket at any time and on any day.

Why is the splash pad at my local park continuing to operate?

Splash pads are not considered ornamental fountains; they serve a recreational purpose and are not addressed by the water use management ordinance. Generally, these water landscapes use recirculated water.

Can I operate a patio mister?

Misters are not addressed under the Stage 2 ordinance; however, we ask that you consider postponing the use of your mister during the exceptional drought.

Swimming Pools

How can I fill or refill my swimming pool during Stage 2 restrictions?

During Stage 2, automatic fill valves may not be used. You do have a couple of other options for filling or refilling a pool. At any time on any day of the week, you may either:

- Manually turn on the fill valve, stay by the pool while it is filling; and then shut the fill valve off again once the pool has filled; or
- Use a handheld hose to fill the pool. If you select this option, you must keep the hose in hand while the pool is filling and cannot leave it to run unattended. To ensure proper backflow prevention, you should hold the hose in a way that keeps the hose end from having contact with the water in the pool.

Restaurants Serving Water

Can we serve water to customers who request it?

Yes.

We normally serve bottled mineral water when patrons are seated – can we continue to do this?

Yes. The restrictions apply to the use of water supplied by Austin Water. You would not be allowed to serve tap water that is filtered or carbonated on site unless requested by the customer.

If a citation were to be issued, would it go to the restaurant or the server?

We would prefer to see compliance with the ordinance, but a citation would generally go to the restaurant as the water utility account holder. The court has the authority to reissue a citation if it believes another party is responsible for the violation.

Vehicle & Surface Washing

Can I wash my driveway?

Stage Two water restrictions prohibit the washing of sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, or other paved areas except when necessary to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard.

How do Stage Two water restrictions affect car washing?

- Other than commercial car washes, cars may only be washed on your designated outdoor water use day from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. You must use a hand-held bucket or a hose equipped with a shut off nozzle. Commercial car washes are businesses open to the public and for which compensation is provided for the washing of the car itself. It does not include the washing of fleet vehicles or other vehicles used in the conduct of a business or in the selling of cars. You may use a waterless cleaning product or a commercial carwash to wash your car at any time and on any day.
- Charity car washes cannot be held during Stage 2 restrictions unless a waterless cleaning product is used instead of water.
- Discharge of cleaning agents to the storm drain system and waterways is considered polluting and illegal. Vehicles and other mobile equipment washed on private property should use biodegradable soap or plain water; it is also acceptable to wash cars on grass provided there are no off-site discharges to a storm drain system or waterway. Report illegal car wash discharges to the 24-hour Pollution Hotline at 974-2550.

If I use a waterless cleaning product, can I hold a charity car wash during Stage 2 restrictions?

The restrictions apply to the use of water supplied by Austin Water. Charity events using waterless cleaning products, with no additional water, are permitted.

Do the Stage 2 restrictions affect pressure washing?

Washing driveways, sidewalks or other paved surfaces is prohibited except to alleviate an immediate health or safety threat. Washing of commercial establishments is permitted where health/safety is an issue, such as around fuel pumps or areas around trash containers. Washing to remove debris or trash is not allowed.

Can I pressure wash my house or windows during Stage 2?

Stage 2 does not specifically restrict washing of houses or windows. We would ask that these activities be delayed until drought conditions improve, but they are not prohibited and may be done on any day of the week.

I have a pressure washing business. Can I still serve my customers?

Businesses may continue to serve customers where pressure washing is needed to alleviate an immediate health or safety threat. We ask that where possible, customers use a broom to remove debris, or for liquid or fuel spills, absorb and dispose of the contaminants.

I have mobile car wash business; what rules apply to me?

Vehicle washing is limited to the hours of 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. with a hand-held bucket or hose with a positive shut-off nozzle. For businesses that travel to wash cars on-site, washing should coincide with that property's assigned watering day. For example, a business washing a vehicle at 625 Main Street would need to do so on a Tuesday. Cleaning agents may not be discharged to a storm drain or waterway; report illegal discharges to the 24-hour Pollution Hotline at 974-2550.

Golf Courses

How do Stage Two restrictions affect golf courses?

Irrigation of golf fairways is limited to before 10 a.m. or after 7 p.m. on the designated watering day. Golf tee and green irrigation is allowed every other day if a plan has been filed with the City to establish the irrigation schedule.

How do I submit a golf course watering plan?

Customers may submit a letter outlining a watering plan along with a property map to watercon@ci.austin.tx.us, or call 974-2199 with questions.

I see a golf course watering every day – is that allowed?

Most area golf courses are supplied with reclaimed water, which is exempt from water use restrictions. However, courses operated by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department have agreed to follow the once-per week watering schedule despite the use of reclaimed water. In some cases, however, these locations may have a large property variance allowing them to divide the property into sections. Each section will be watered only once per week, but some sections may be watered on a different day than typically assigned to their address.

Building Foundations

Do the Stage 2 restrictions prevent me from watering the ground around my foundation to prevent foundation cracking?

No. Watering the ground around a foundation is allowed at any time, but only as necessary to prevent the foundation from cracking. A soaker hose may be used as long as it is applying water only to the foundation and not the landscape.

Variances

New Landscape

I'm putting in a new landscape to replace my existing landscape. Can I get a variance to allow me to water it more than once a week during Stage 2?

During Stage 2 restrictions, Austin Water will not offer variances to customers who install a new landscape to replace an existing landscape. We ask customers to delay new landscape installation until the restrictions are lifted.

Can I get a variance if I am overseeding or changing out the color beds on my property?

No. These areas should be watered on your watering day, or by hand.

Large Property

What if I can't water my entire property in one day?

Large properties, where the irrigation system is incapable of covering the property under the watering schedule, may receive a variance that allows them to be divided into sections with each section being watered only once per week. This would include uniquely shaped lots that use hose end sprinkler systems and cannot irrigate each section within the allotted timeframe.

To apply for this variance, you must submit a completed Large Property Variance Request form, a site map, and a proposed watering schedule. Applicants must also successfully complete an irrigation system inspection to ensure the system is in compliance with all other aspects of the water use ordinance. Please note that the variance approval process may take several weeks to complete and the property must follow the watering schedule until a variance is approved.

What if I already have a Large Property Variance?

Customers who received a Large Property Variance during Stage 1 restrictions must modify their schedules so that each zone is watered no more than once a week. Customers must submit the revised schedule in writing to watercon@ci.austin.tx.us or Austin Water Conservation Division P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767 no later than **September 6, 2011**. Any variances not revised by that date will expire and the property would be subject to enforcement action if it waters on a day other than the assigned watering day.

Fire

Can I get a variance to the lawn watering restrictions for fire protection?

No. The Fire Department has determined that watering your lawn will not have an appreciable effect on the current fire conditions. This is because most of the fires are starting in wild land, on the roadside or greenbelt areas that are not typically watered. Flying embers from these fires spread the fire to homes. An ember may land in a dry lawn where the grass begins to burn, but unless the grass is several inches tall it will not present a significant fire threat to the house. The Fire Department advises that the most effective measure to prevent fire from spreading to your home is to clear brush and debris in an area at least 50 feet from your home.

Special Circumstances

What other situations are eligible for variances?

Variances may be granted when compliance with the watering restrictions adversely affects health and safety, fire protection, herbicide/pesticide application, or substantially threatens an applicant's primary source of income. Please note the following policies for Special Circumstance Variances during Stage 2 restrictions:

Schedule Conflicts

- Customers who are regularly required to work out of town on their scheduled watering day may submit a statement attesting to the work conflict when completing the variance request. These requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If approved, an alternate watering day will be assigned for the duration of Stage 2 restrictions. Variances for other work conflicts will also be evaluated on a case-by-case basis after submittal of a completed variance request.
- Variances will not be granted for personal conflicts including religion, sports, vacation, or trash pickup days.

Health Concerns

- Customers who have a medical condition that requires them to receive assistance with watering and who do not have an automatic irrigation system can submit a statement attesting to the condition and requesting alternative compliance with the schedule.

Athletic Fields

- Variances to protect player health and safety (soften fields, dust abatement, etc.) will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Fertilizer/Pesticide Application

- Variances for pesticide application will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Variances will not be given for fertilizer application, as that further stresses plants.

Threat to Primary Source of Income

- Variances will be granted only when the *primary* focus of a business is affected.
- Pressure washing businesses may apply for a variance if their equipment is fitted with recycling units and they register with Water Conservation.
- Car washing businesses may apply for a variance if all washes are done by hand and they can illustrate steps taken to minimize water use (washing with buckets, waterless products offered, etc.).
- No variances will be granted for car wash businesses with automatic equipment not meeting efficiency standards, businesses requiring landscape to attract customers, or businesses that pressure wash as a minor part of other services (e.g., landscape maintenance).

The Special Circumstance Variance application is available at

www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/conservation/downloads/specialcircumstancevariance2011.pdf.